THE
NEW YORK LEDGER
DEVOTED TO CHOICE LITERATURE ROMANCE THE NEWS COMMERCE

SATURDAY, MARCH 30, 1872. {Page 6}

SAVED BY A WOMAN'S SMILE.

BY FRANCES HENSHAW BADEN.

It was at the sea-shore, the most fashionable resort of the time, that from one of the cottage windows floated out on the evening air a woman's voice. She was singing an old song—Kathleen Mavourneen. There was a world of passion in her tone, passion really felt, not affected, *one* was wild enough to believe, as, leaning over the instrument, he listened to her song. She had a wonderful voice; so full and powerful now, and again lulling one into a blissfull dream by its soft sweetness.

The song was finished. Both the words and music had penetrated the inmost soul of Cecil Delmar.

"Why did you sing that song, Florence?" he asked.

"Because it pleased me," she answered, raising her eyes to his, and smiling.

How beautiful she was! And her smile!

Did ever woman smile as Florence Carrington? many have asked; such a bright, bewildering smile was hers.

"Florence, do you know your smile is the brightest that ever lingered on a woman's lips," Cecil said, gazing lovingly on her.

"So many have told me," she answered, with provoking carelessness.

"Aye, Florence, a smile which carries a man almost to Heaven when it is given him, or sinks him to the realms of despair, if turned on another. Florence, I never hear that song, 'Her bright smile haunts me still,' but I think of your smile, and feel as the poet must have felt. Yes, love, even in eye and heart it has lived, cheering, comforting, and bringing me back to you, ever constant and true—"

"There, there, Cecil; do stop! One would think you were rehearsing for a private theatrical," she said, turning again, and running her fingers over the keys of the instrument.

"Florence!"

"Cecil, please do not stare at me so; it is very impolite. I should have thought your travelling in Europe would have polished and changed you a little," she said.

"Changed! Florence, what do you mean?"

"I mean, Cecil, that three years might be expected to bring change to all. When you left home, I was a child, not knowing my own heart; and you—"

"A man, Florence, giving his heart with perfect faith to a girl he believed loving, constant and true," Cecil said, his voice trembling with emotion.

"Nonsense, Cecil! Ours was but a boy and girl affair, and years have—"

"Changed the artless, loving girl to a woman of the world, no longer content with the devotion of one heart. Florence, you are trying me; say it is so."

"No, Cecil; nothing of the kind. I am sorry to grieve you, but it will only be a passing cloud. And you will, perhaps, thank me for considering your future welfare. You have work to do for years yet, Cecil. Your fortune to retrieve, a name to make. And then you can think again of love. You wrong me when you say I am not content with the devotion of one heart. I am, and proud of it too. But it is the heart of one his country is proud of. And when so many fair women were sighing for what I have won, I should be content. See, Cecil."

She took from her pocket a little portrait, and handed it to him. It was the face of one Cecil had seen lingering long beside her the night before; one he had known by reputation for years; the popular bachelor of the time and place.

"Now, Cecil, I have acted candidly with you; can we not still be friends?"

He knew all then—knew she was lost to him—knew that the hopes of years were crushed—knew that the girl before him was false.

Aye, but knew not that more than to him was she false, false to the pleadings of her own heart. Ambition had conquered in the contest, and love was buried in the hidden recesses of her heart. The false girl vainly thought that in the brilliant future she would win, if not happiness, at least content, oblivion of the past.

The compressed lips parted; he was about to speak to her—to upbraid, or perchance with words of forgiveness to part. Whichever it might have been was checked by the sound of a coming step—a firm, commanding tread. Both knew it. A flush mantled her pale face. With a cold, bitter smile, Cecil Delmar turned away. Another instant, and she knew he had gone.

"False girl!" he said. "Will wealth and position make her happy? Yes—perhaps; for surely she has no heart for aught else. How I worshipped her, believing her loving and true! Well, the dream is over, and life has nothing more for me. Could my loss of fortune have made her fly from me? Ah, she might have known how I would have worked for wealth and fame to offer her! How inviting the water looks to-night! The wave seems calling me. I *will* go!"

Cecil, leaving Florence, had wandered beside the sea-shore. Certainly life seemed very dark to him then. He believed the mysterious Future could not be more so. Mounting the bridge, he determined from thence to plunge into the bosom of the ocean.

Although a late hour, many persons still lingered there. Cecil seated himself to wait their departure. At length all were gone save a party just opposite.

"Come, let us go," said one of them.

"No, no," answered a voice so peculiarly sweet that Cecil was drawn from his sad musings to listen.

"*Do* come, now, Louise. What are you stopping for?" again urged one.

"No, no; I want to stay—to enjoy this scene. What a glorious night! Ours is a world of such beauty, I often think how can one wish to leave it!" said the sweet voice again.

"Oh, Louise, as yet you have only seen the bright side of life. Clouds may arise—"

"Yes, I know. But don't talk of clouds. Now only see. The moon has stolen behind that huge dark bank, as if to demonstrate your ideas. But oh! true to life, the darkness is only temporary. Here our beautiful queen comes forth again, all darkness dispelling. I think the scene of the last few moments is a true picture of life, and with its lesson too. Oh, yes, I cling to our beautiful earth, never fearing its darkness, which I know must fade away, and the coming day be all the brighter for the dreariness preceding it."

Was she talking to him? Cecil almost believed she had penetrated his very soul, and was pleading to him for its safety.

"Louise, you should have been called Hope. That name would have just suited you, you are such a trusting, hopeful little body," said one of her companions.

"Yes; I know neither doubts nor fears. 'Hope on, hope ever,' is my motto. Come; now we will go, if you please."

She arose, with her friends, and moved with them until within a few steps of Cecil, when she turned, as if for a last look on the beautiful scene.

Was it by accident or design that a cluster of natural flowers fell at Cecil's feet? He had seen them in her hair a few moments before.

She stooped, as if to regain them, when Cecil sprang forward and caught them up. Quickly detaching one, he handed the others to her. She saw him, he knew, for the night was as bright and clear as noonday. Receiving her flowers, she thanked him with a smile—a smile so different from Florence's smile; not near so bright, but a gentle, sweet, pleading, saving smile. She passed on, and Cecil Delmar drew back from the entrance of the "dark valley," and followed—saved.

"Louise, what meant your words and actions to-night?" asked the gentle girl's lover, a few moments after, when they were seated alone in a private parlor.

"Harry, you know I meant something?"

she asked.

"Surely. I know too, my darling, it was something of good only."

"Thank you, Harry," she answered, her eyes filling with tears of joy. "I will tell you. You have often said I could read one's thoughts. Sometimes I can. That young man who sat opposite us I thought was waiting our departure to throw himself into the ocean. I watched him closely from the moment he came near. I read despair on every feature. I talked for his ear, and saw he heard and listened. Believing I had caused him to waver in his determination, I thought possibly I might save him. That was why I dropped my little bouquet, and smiled upon him. Likely I may never see him again, as we leave to-morrow morning. But Heaven grant my endeavor may have helped him, if he was in despair, as I believed."

"Louise, you are an angel, and have saved *one* man from destruction, I know. What I am, you have made me. If that young man was in danger, you have saved him too, I think. I saw him leave the bridge."

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Years passed on, during which many times Cecil Delmar's thoughts reverted to the girl who had saved him. Louise was a name to him the most beautiful and sacred. A little flower, faded and yellow, was treasured away, and prized dearly, when all reminders of Florence were lost and forgotten. He often heard of her in the world of fashion. Rumor spoke of her as not a happy woman. The man that many women smiled upon and "sighed for," as Florence had said, cared but little for the smiles of his wife. Perhaps he had looked into the depths of her heart, and found the skeleton hidden there.

Florence had told Cecil he had work to do. He had done, and was still doing it. Fortune had returned. Fame crowned him with her brilliant laurels. Fair women smiled upon him. Men were proud to call him friend.

Once more they met, ten years after, when Florence, regally beautiful, and a widow, seated in the "Hall of the Great," gazed from the gallery down upon the Senator from ——. The same old smile—the bright, bewitching smile. But she felt its power was over; gone, she feared, beyond recall. He hastened not to her side. She had almost despaired of his coming at all, when, as though they had parted but yesterday, he approached her. There was no hesitancy in his greeting. Calm, easy and graceful, he accepted the seat beside her, and entered into a conversation on the popular topics of the day. What cared she for them? Was it of this she had dreamed, watched and waited for? Skilfully she turned his thoughts that they might drift back to other days. But he cared not to linger with the past, she felt.

Oft his gaze wandered over the brilliant throng. At length Florence saw a look of great interest in his eye, and turning to her, he asked:

"Do you know the young lady just leaving the gallery?"

"Slightly; I have met her. But she is not a very young lady—Mrs. Clifton. She is thought quite pretty," Florence answered.

There came a look of disappointment over his face quite unmistakable to Florence, as well as to a young lady friend who sat near, and said:

"Oh, but do not despair, Mr. Delmar. She is a widow."

"Thank you," Cecil answered, smiling.

And Florence saw the information gave him pleasure. A few moments after, the young lady left them to speak to a friend in another part of the gallery. Cecil Delmar and Florence were alone. Turning toward her with a forgiving smile, he said:

"Florence."

Hope brightened again. It was the first time he had called her so.

"Years ago," he continued, "you told me I might some day thank you. Perhaps I shall. You say Mrs. Clifton is thought pretty; to me she is more than beautiful. To her I owe all that I am. She saved me that night you sent me forth despairing, reckless. I intended fleeing from the world which seemed so dark. Her words to others reached my ear. They were hopeful, cheering. I hesitated in my purpose then. A little longer and she smiled on me; that smile was my salvation. Do you wonder that to me she is more than ever woman was before? Until to-day I have never met her since that night. I shall seek an introduction; and if fortune favors me, I shall thank you for my happiness."

There was no bitterness in his tone. She would have liked it better had there been. He was dealing candidly, truthfully with her.

That night, at the President's reception, she saw him beside Louise Clifton.

She knew he was happy; that he would grow daily happier. The gentle woman was smiling upon him. Smiles not deceiving were Louise's, but sweet and encouraging, coming not alone from lip and eye, but from the pure, beautiful spirit within.

Before the close of the session, Florence read the announcement of the approaching nuptials of Cecil Delmar and the woman he loved as she knew she had never been loved.

She left the gay capital a saddened and disappointed woman. Life had taught her the severe lesson that wealth and position cannot satisfy the heart's yearnings.